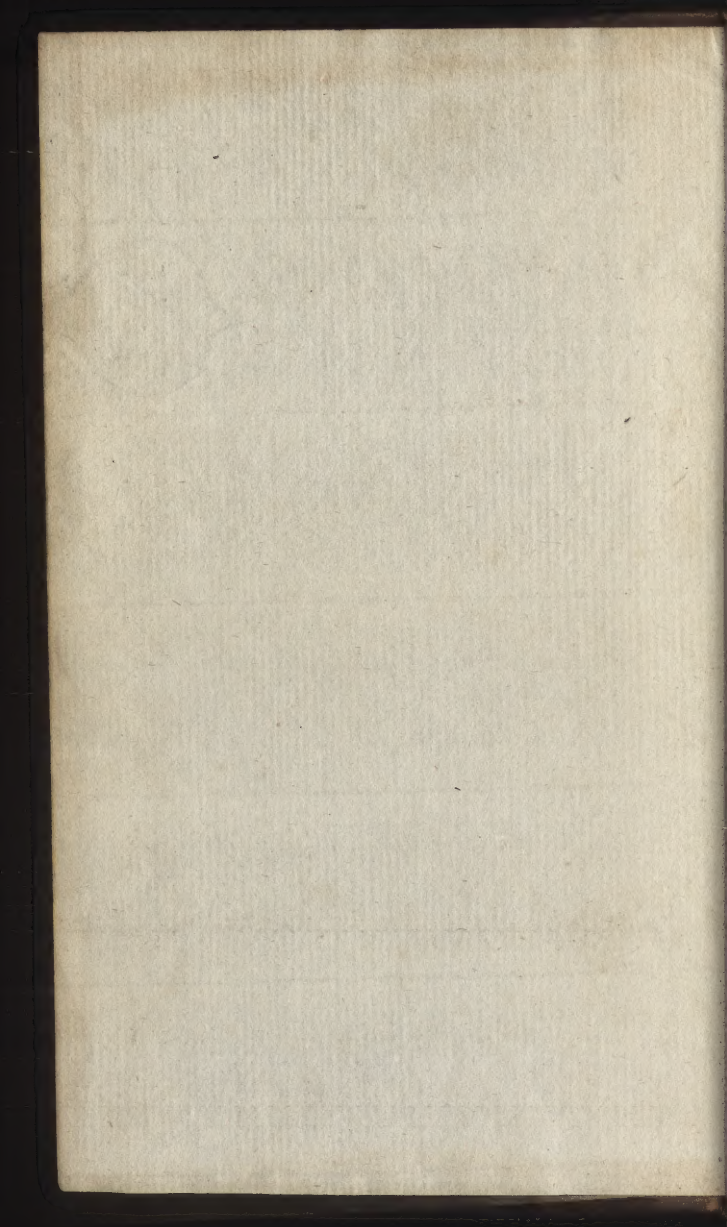


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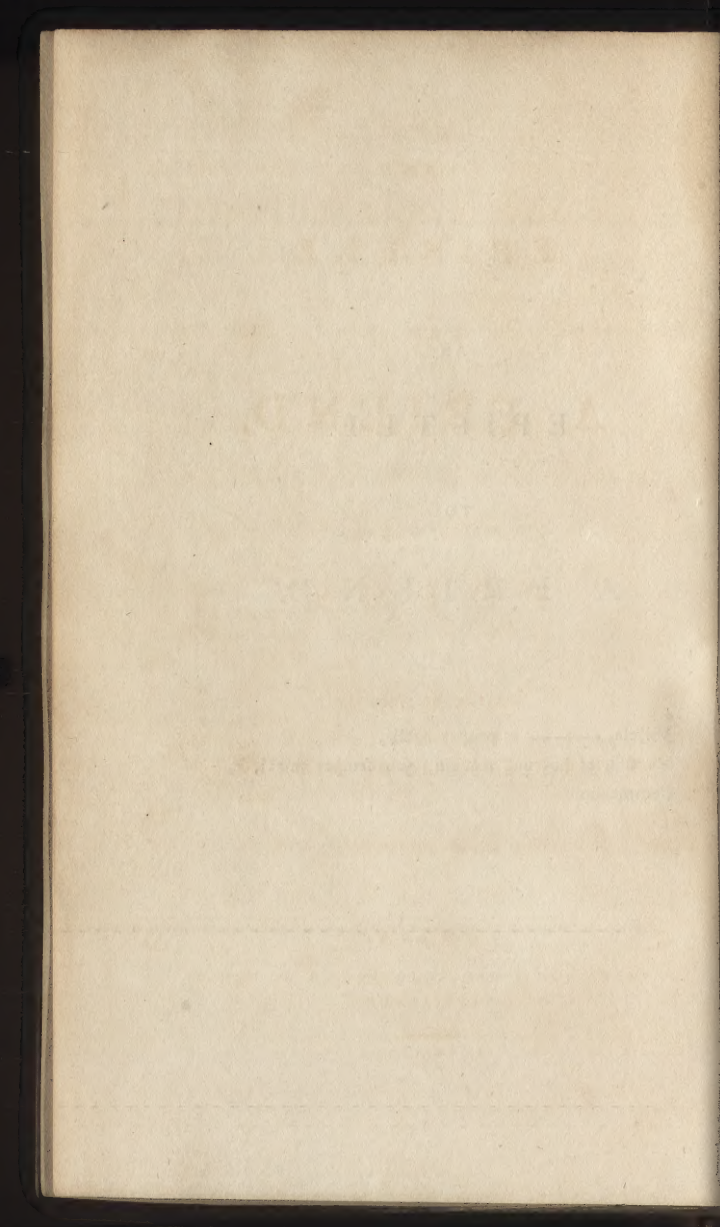
Ulrich Middeldorf

C126



AN
EPISTLE
TO
A FRIEND.

Villula, ——— et pauper agelle,
Me tibi, et hos unà mecum, quos semper amavi,
Commendo.



AN
EPISTLE
TO
A FRIEND,

WITH OTHER
POEMS,

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE PLEASURES OF MEMORY."

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

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1799.

THE EPISTLE

A FRIEND

O. E. M. R.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THE PILGRIM'S OF MEMPHIS

P R E F A C E.

EVERY reader turns with pleasure to those passages of Horace, and Pope, and Boileau, which describe how they lived and where they dwelt ; and which, being interspersed among their satirical writings, derive a secret and irresistible grace from the contrast, and are admirable examples of what in Painting is termed repose.

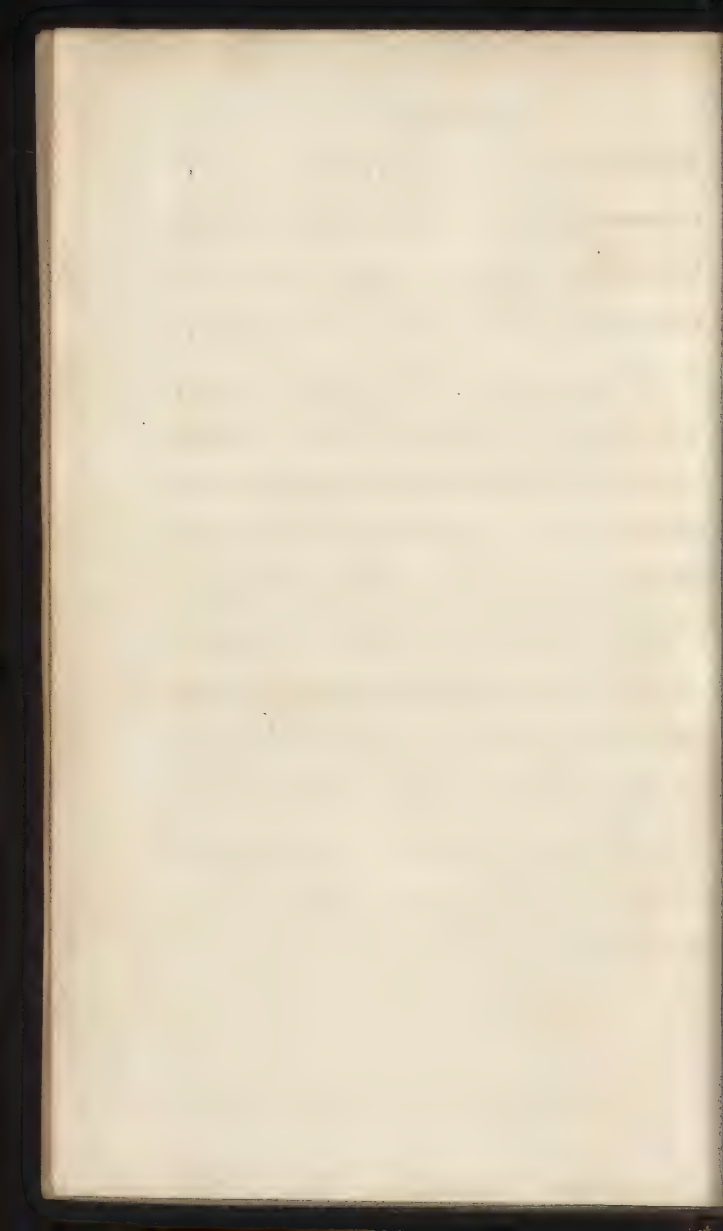
We have admittance to Horace at all hours. We enjoy the company and conversation at his table ; and his suppers, like Plato's, ' non solum in præsentia, sed etiam postero die jucundæ sunt.' But,

when we look round as we sit there, we find ourselves in a Sabine farm, and not in a Roman villa. His windows have every charm of prospect; but his furniture might have descended from Cincinnatus; and gems, and pictures, and old marbles are mentioned by him more than once with a seeming indifference.

His English Imitator thought and felt, perhaps, more correctly on the subject; and embellished his garden and grotto with great industry and success. But to these alone he solicits our notice. On the ornaments of his house he is silent; and appears to have reserved all the minuter touches of his pencil for the library, the chapel, and the banquetting-room of Timon. Nor could the *Diable boiteux*

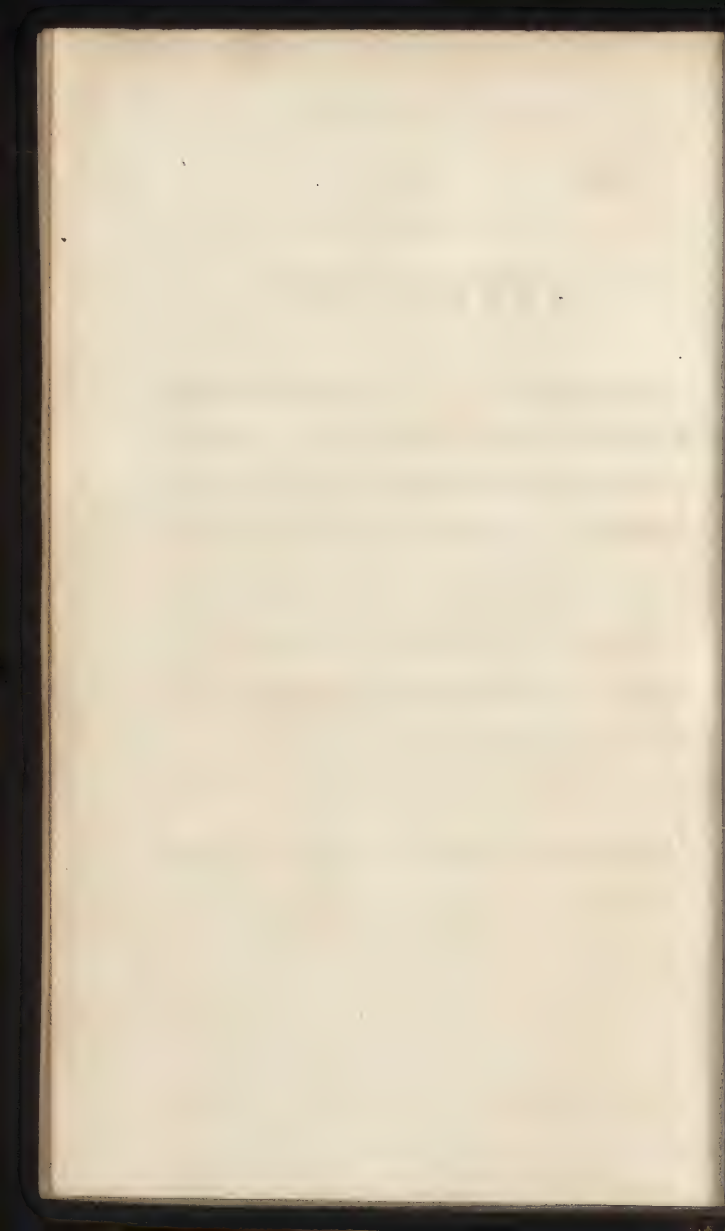
have laid them open with more ability. Le savoir de notre siècle, says Rousseau, tend beaucoup plus à détruire qu'à édifier. On censure d'un ton de maître ; pour proposer, il en faut prendre un autre.

It is the design of this Epistle to illustrate the virtue of True Taste ; and to shew how little she requires to secure, not only the comforts, but even the elegancies of life. True Taste is an excellent Economist. She confines her choice to few objects, and delights in producing great effects by small means : while False Taste is for ever sighing after the new and the rare ; and reminds us, in her works, of the Scholar of Apelles, who, not being able to paint his Helen beautiful, determined to make her fine.



ARGUMENT.

An Invitation, v. 1. The approach to a Villa described, v. 5. Its situation, v. 17. Its few apartments, v. 57. furnished with casts from the Antique, and engravings from the Italian Masters, v. 63. The dining-room, v. 83. The library, v. 89. A cold bath, v. 101. An ice-house, v. 111. A winter-walk, v. 157. A summer-walk, v. 169. The invitation renewed, v. 203. Conclusion, v. 211.



AN
EPISTLE
TO A
FRIEND.

WHEN, with a REAUMUR's skill, thy curious
mind

Has class'd the insect-tribes of human-kind,

Each with its busy hum, or gilded wing,

Its subtle web-work, or its venom'd sting;

Let me, to claim a few unvalued hours, 5

Point the green lane that leads thro' fern and flowers;

The shelter'd gate that opens to my field,

And the white front thro' mingling elms reveal'd.

In vain, alas, a village-friend invites
To simple comforts, and domestic rites, 10
When the gay months of Carnival resume
Their annual round of glitter and perfume ;
When Bond-street hails thee to its splendid mart,
Its hives of sweets, and cabinets of art ;
And, lo, majestic as thy manly song, 15
Flows the full tide of human life along.

Still must my partial pencil love to dwell
On the home-prospects of my hermit cell ;
The mossy pales that skirt the orchard-green,
Here hid by shrub-wood, there by glimpses seen ; 20
And the brown pathway, that, with careless flow,
Sinks, and is lost among the trees below.

Still must it trace (the flattering tints forgive)
Each fleeting charm that bids the landscape live.
Oft o'er the mead, at pleasing distance pass ¹ 25
Browsing the hedge by fits the pannier'd ass ;
The idling shepherd-boy, with rude delight,
Whistling his dog to mark the pebble's flight ;
And in her kerchief blue the cottage-maid,
With brimming pitcher from the shadowy glade.
Far to the south a mountain-vale retires, 31
Rich in its groves, and glens, and village-spires ;
Its upland lawns, and cliffs with foliage hung,
Its wizard-stream, nor nameless nor unsung :
And thro' the various year, the various day, ² 35
What scenes of glory burst, and melt away !

When April-verdure springs in Grosvenor-square,
And the furr'd Beauty comes to winter there,
She bids old Nature marr the plan no more,
Yet still the seasons circle as before. 40

Ah, still as soon the young Aurora plays,
Tho' moons and flambeaux trail their broadest blaze ;
As soon the sky-lark pours his matin song,
Tho' Evening lingers at the mask so long.

There let her strike with momentary ray, 45
As tapers shine their little lives away ;
There let her practise from herself to steal,
And look the happiness she does not feel ;
The ready smile and bidden blush employ
At Faro-routs that dazzle to destroy ; 50

Fan with affected ease the essenc'd air,
And lisp of fashions with unmeaning stare.
Be thine to meditate an humbler flight,
When morning fills the fields with rosy light ;
Be thine to blend, nor thine a vulgar aim, 55
Repose with dignity, with Quiet fame.

Here no state-chambers in long line unfold,
Bright with broad mirrors, rough with fretted gold ;
Yet modest ornament, with use combin'd,
Attracts the eye to exercise the mind. 60
Small change of scene, small space his home requires, 6
Who leads a life of satisfied desires.

What tho' no marble breathes, no canvas glows,
From every point a ray of genius flows ! 4

Be mine to bleſs the more mechanic ſkill, 65
That ſtamps, renews, and multiplies at will ;
And cheaply circulates, thro' diſtant climes,
The faireſt relics of the pureſt times.
Here from the mould to conſcious being ſtart
Thoſe finer forms, the miracles of art ; 70
Here choſen gems, impreſt on ſulphur, ſhine,
That ſlept for ages in a ſecond mine ;
And here the faithful graver dares to trace
A MICHAEL's grandeur, and a RAPHAEL's grace !
Thy gallery, Florence, gilds my humble walls, 75
And my low roof the Vatican recalls !

Soon as the morning-dream my pillow flies,
To waking ſenſe what brighter viſions riſe !

O mark ! again the courfers of the Sun, ⁵
 At GUIDO's call, their round of glory run ! 80
 Again the rofy Hours refume their flight,
 Obscur'd and loft in floods of golden light !

But could thine erring friend fo long forget
 (Sweet fource of penfive joy and fond regret)
 That here its warmeft hues the pencil flings, 85
 Lo ! here the loft reftores, the abfent brings ;
 And ftill the Few beft lov'd and moft rever'd ⁶
 Rife round the board their focial fmile endear'd ? ⁷

Selected fhelves fhall claim thy ftudious hours ; 89
 There fhall thy ranging mind be fed on flowers ! *

* —apis Matinæ

More modoque

Grata carpentis thyma—

HOR.

There, while the shaded lamp's mild lustre streams,
 Read ancient books, or woo inspiring dreams ; 8
 And, when a sage's bust arrests thee there, 9
 Pause, and his features with his thoughts compare.
 —Ah, most that Art my grateful rapture calls, 95
 Which breathes a soul into the silent walls ; †
 Which gathers round the Wise of every Tongue, 10
 All on whose words departed nations hung ;
 Still prompt to charm with many a converse sweet ;
 Guides in the world, companions in retreat ! 100

Tho' my thatch'd bath no rich mosaic knows,
 A limpid stream with unfelt current flows.

† Postea verò quàm Tyrannio mihi libros disposuit, mens
 addita videtur meis ædibus. CIC.

Emblem of Life! which, still as we survey,

Seems motionless, yet ever glides away !

The shadowy walls record, with Attic art, 105

The strength and beauty that its waves impart.

Here THETIS, bending, with a mother's fears

Dips her dear boy, whose pride restrains his tears.

There VENUS, rising, shrinks with sweet surprize,

As her fair self reflected seems to rise ! 110

But hence away ! yon rocky cave beware !

A fullen captive broods in silence there. 11

There, tho' the dog-star flame, condemn'd to dwell,

In the dark centre of its inmost cell,

Wild Winter ministers his dread controul, 115

To cool, and crystallize the nectar'd bowl !

His faded form an awful grace retains ;
 Stern tho' subdued, majestic tho' in chains !

Far from the joyless glare, the maddening strife,
 And all ' the dull impertinence of life,' 120
 These eyelids open to the rising ray, ¹²
 And close, when Nature bids, at close of day.
 Here, at the dawn, the kindling landscape glows ;
 There noon-day levees call from faint repose. 124
 Here the flush'd wave flings back the parting light ;
 There glimmering lamps anticipate the night.
 When from his classic dreams the student steals, *
 Amid the buzz of crouds, the whirl of wheels,

* Ingenium, sibi quod vacuas defumfit Athenas,
 Et studiis annos septem dedit, insenuitque
 Libris et curis, statuâ taciturnius exit
 Plerumque—

HOR.

To muse unnotic'd, while around him press
The meteor-forms of equipage and drefs ; 130
Alone, in wonder lost, he seems to stand
A very stranger in his native land !
Like those blest Youths (forgive the fabling page) 13
Whose blameless lives deceiv'd a twilight age, *
Spent in sweet slumbers ; till the miner's spade 135
Unclos'd the cavern, and the morning play'd.
Ah, what their strange surprize, their wild delight !
New arts of life, new manners meet their sight !
In a new world they wake, as from the dead ;
Yet doubt the trance dissolv'd, the vision fled ! 140

* —fallentis semita vitæ.

HOR.

O come, and, rich in intellectual wealth,
Blend thought with exercise, with knowledge health ;
Long, in this shelter'd scene of letter'd talk,
With sober step repeat the pensive walk ;
Nor scorn, when graver triflings fail to please, 145
The cheap amusements of a mind at ease ;
Here every care in sweet oblivion cast,
And many an idle hour—not idly pass'd.

No tuneful echoes, ambush'd at my gate, 149
Catch the blest accents of the wise and great. 14
Vain of its various page, no Album breathes
The sigh that Friendship, or the Muse bequeathes.
Yet some good Genii o'er my hearth preside,
Oft the far friend, with secret spell, to guide ; 154

And there I trace, when the grey evening lours,
A silent chronicle of happier hours!

When Christmas revels in a world of snow,
And bids her berries blush, her carols flow;
His spangling shower when Frost the wizard flings;
Or, borne in ether blue, on viewless wings, 160
O'er the white pane his silvery foliage weaves,
And gems with icicles the sheltering eaves;
—Thy muffled friend his nectarine-wall pursues,
What time the sun the yellow crocus wooes, 164
Screen'd from the arrowy North; and duly hies *
To meet the morning-rumour as it flies;

* Fallacem circum, vespertinumque pererro
Sæpe forum. HOR.

To range the murmuring market-place, and view
The motley groups that faithful TENIERS drew.

When Spring bursts forth in blossoms thro' the vale,
And her wild music triumphs on the gale, 170
Oft with my book I muse from stile to stile ; *
Oft in my porch the listless noon beguile,
Framing loose numbers, till declining day
Thro' the green trellis shoots a crimson ray ; 174
Till the West-wind leads on the twilight hours,
And shakes the fragrant bells of closing flowers.

Nor boast, O Choisy, feat of soft delight, 15
The secret charm of thy voluptuous night.

* Tantôt, un livre en main, errant dans les prairies—

BOILEAU.

Vain is the blaze of wealth, the pomp of power !
Lo, here, attendant on the shadowy hour, 180
Thy closet-supper, serv'd by hands unseen,
Sheds, like an evening-star, its ray serene, 16
To hail our coming. Not a step prophane
Dares, with rude sound, the cheerful rite restrain ;
And, while the frugal banquet glows reveal'd, 185
Pure and unbought *,—the natives of my field ;
While blushing fruits thro' scatter'd leaves invite,
Still clad in bloom, and veil'd in azure light ;—
With wine, as rich in years as HORACE sings,
With water, clear as his own fountain flings, 190
The shifting side-board plays its humbler part,
Beyond the triumphs of a Lorient's art.

* —dapes incmtas. HOR.

Thus, in this calm recess, so richly fraught
With mental light, and luxury of thought, 194
My life steals on ; (O could it blend with thine!)
Careless my course, yet not without design.
So thro' the vales of Loire the bee-hives glide, 17
The light raft dropping with the silent tide ;
So, till the laughing scenes are lost in night,
The busy people wing their various flight, 200
Culling unnumber'd sweets from nameless flowers,
That scent the vineyard in its purple hours.

Rise, ere the watch-relieving clarions play,
Caught thro' St. James's groves at blush of day ;
Ere its full voice the choral anthem flings 205
Thro' trophied tombs of heroes and of kings.

Haste to the tranquil shade of learned ease, *
Tho' skill'd alike to dazzle and to please ;
Tho' each gay scene be search'd with anxious eye,
Nor thy shut door be pass'd without a sigh. 210

If, when this roof shall know thy friend no more,
Some, form'd like thee, should once, like thee,
explore ;

Invoke the lares of his lov'd retreat,
And his lone walks imprint with pilgrim-feet ;
Then be it said, (as, vain of better days, 215
Some grey domestic prompts the partial praise ;)
“ Unknown he liv'd, unenvied, not unblest ;
Reason his guide, and Happiness his guest.

* *Innocuas amo delicias doctamque quietem.*

In the clear mirror of his moral page,
We trace the manners of a purer age. 220
His soul, with thirst of genuine glory fraught,
Scorn'd the false lustre of licentious thought.
—One fair asylum from the world he knew,
One chosen seat, that charms with various view!
Who boasts of more (believe the serious strain) 225
Sighs for a home, and sighs, alas! in vain.
Thro' each he roves, the tenant of a day,
And, with the swallow, wings the year away!" 18

THE END.

N O T E S
AND
ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE 1. Verse 25.

Oft o'er the mead, at pleasing distance, pass—

COSMO of Medicis preferred his Apennine villa, because all that he commanded from its windows was exclusively his own.

How unworthy of his character; and how unlike the wise Athenian, who, when he had a farm to sell, directed the cryer to proclaim, as its best recommendation, that it had a good neighbourhood!

PLUT. in Vit. Themist.

NOTE 2. Verse 35.

And, thro' the various year, the various day—

Horace commends the house,

—— longos quæ prospicit agros.

And I think he is right. Distant views, if there is a good foreground, are generally the most pleasing ; as they contain the greatest variety, both in themselves, and in their accidental variations.

Mr. GILPIN on the High-Lands of Scotland, i. 159.

NOTE 3. Verse 61.

Small change of scene, small space his home requires—

Many a great man, in passing through the apartments of his palace, has made the melancholy re-

fection of the venerable Cosimo : Questa è troppo gran casa à sì poco famiglia.

MACH. Ist. Fior. lib. vii.

I confess, says Cowley, I love littleness almost in all things. A little convenient estate, a little chearful house, a little company, and a very little feast.

Essay vi.

So also says the Conqueror of Silesia !

Petit bien, qui ne doit rien,

Petite maison, petite table, &c.

When Socrates was asked why he had built for himself so small a house, " Small as it is," he replied, " I wish I could fill it with friends."

PHÆDRUS, l. iii. 9.

These indeed are all that a wise man would desire to assemble ; " for a croud is not company, and faces

“ are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tink-
“ ling cymbal, where there is no love.”

BACON'S *Essays*, xxvii.

NOTE 4. Verse 64.

From every point a ray of genius flows !

By this means, when the heavens are filled with clouds, when the earth swims in rain, and all nature wears a lowering countenance, I withdraw myself from these uncomfortable scenes into the visionary worlds of art ; where I meet with shining landships, gilded triumphs, beautiful faces, and all those other objects that fill the mind with gay ideas, &c.

ADDISON.

It is remarkable that Antony, in his adversity, passed some time in a small but splendid retreat,

which he called his Timonium, and from which probably originated the idea of the Parisian Boudoir, that favorite apartment, *ou l'on se retire pour être seul, mais ou l'on ne boude point.*

STRABO, l. xvii. PLUT. in Vit. Anton.

NOTE 5. Verse 79.

O mark ! again the courfers of the Sun,

At GUIDO's call, &c.

Alluding to his celebrated fresco in the Rospigliosi Palace at Rome. It has been engraved by Jac. Freii, and by Morghen.

NOTE 6. Verse 87.

And still the Few best lov'd and most rever'd—

The dining-room is dedicated to Conviviality ;

or, as Cicero somewhere expresses it, *Communitati vitæ atque victûs*. There we wish most for the society of our friends ; and, perhaps, in their absence, most require their portraits.

The moral advantages of this furniture may be illustrated by the pretty story of an Athenian courtesan, “ who, in the midst of a riotous banquet with her lovers, accidentally cast her eye on the portrait of a philosopher, that hung opposite to her seat : the happy character of temperance and virtue struck her with so lively an image of her own unworthiness, that she instantly quitted the room ; and, retiring home, became ever after an example of temperance, as she had been before of debauchery.”

WEBB'S Inquiry into the Beauties of
Painting, p. 33.

NOTE 7. Verse 88.

Rise round the board, &c.—

A long table, and a square table, says Bacon, seem things of form, but are things of substance ; for at a long table a few at the upper end, in effect, sway all the business.

Essay xx.

Perhaps Arthur was right, when he instituted the order of the round table. In the town-house of Aix-la-Chapelle is still to be seen the round table, which may almost literally be said to have given peace to Europe in 1748. Nor is it only at a congress of plenipotentiaries that place gives precedence.

NOTE 8. Verse 92.

Read ancient books, or woo inspiring dreams.

The reader will here remember that passage of Horace,

Nunc veterum libris, nunc fomno, &c.

which was inscribed by Lord Chesterfield on the frieze of his library.

NOTE 9. Verse 93.

And, when a sage's bust arrests thee there—

Siquidem non solum ex auro argentove, aut certe ex ære in bibliothecis dicantur illi, quorum immortales animæ in iisdem locis ibi loquuntur: quinimo etiam quæ non sunt, finguntur, pariuntque desideria non traditi vultus, sicut in Homero evenit. Quo majus (ut equidem arbitror) nullum est felici-

tatis specimen, quam semper omnes scire cupere,
qualis fuerit aliquis. PLIN. Nat. Hist. xxxv. 2.

Cicero speaks with great affection of a little seat
under Aristotle in the library of Atticus. Literis
sustentor & recreor; maloque in illa tua sedecula,
quam habes sub imagine Aristotelis, sedere, quàm
in istorum sella curuli! Ep. ad Att. iv. 10.

Nor should we forget that Dryden used to draw
Inspiration from the "majestic face" of Shakspeare;
and that a print of Newton was the only ornament
of the closet of Buffon. Ep. to Kneller. Voyage
à Montbart par Hérault de Séchelles.

In the chamber of a man of genius we

write all down:

Such and such pictures;—there the window;

————— the arras, figures,

Why, such, and such.

Cymbeline.

NOTE 10. Verse 97.

Which gathers round the Wise of every Tongue.

Quis tantis non gaudeat & glorietur hospitibus, exclaims Petrarch.—Spectare, etsi nihil aliud, certè juvat.—Homerus apud me mutus, immò verò ego apud illum furdus sum. Gaudeo tamen vel aspectû solo, et sæpè illum amplexus ac suspirans dico : O magne vir, &c. Epist. Var. Lib.

NOTE 11. Verse 112.

A fullen captive broods in silence there.

This thought is most beautifully dilated in an Inscription for an Ice-house, by a Lady of great celebrity in the Literary World. Nor has it escaped Waller in his verses on St. James's Park. v. 53.

NOTE 12. Verse 121.

These eyelids open to the rising ray.

Your bed-chamber, and also your library, says Vitruvius, should have an eastern aspect; *usus enim matutinum postulat lumen.*

Not so the picture-gallery; which requires a north-light, *uti colores, propter constantiam luminis, immutata permaneant qualitate.* L. vi. c. 6.

NOTE 13. Verse 133.

Like those blest Youths (forgive the fabling page)

See the Legend of the Seven Sleepers, as translated from the Syriac by the care of Gregory of Tours.

GIBBON'S Hist. c. 33.

NOTE 14. Verse 150.

Catch the blest accents of the wise and great.

Mr. Pope delights in enumerating his illustrious guests. Nor is this an exclusive privilege of the poet. The Medici Palace at Florence exhibits a long and imposing catalogue. ‘Semper hi parietes columnæque eruditis vocibus resonuerunt.’

Another is also preserved at Chanteloup, the seat of the Duke of Choiseul.

NOTE 15. Verse 177.

Nor boast, O Choisy, seat of soft delight—

At the petits soupés of Choisy were first introduced those admirable pieces of mechanism, afterwards carried to perfection by Lorient, the Confidante and

the Servante; a table and a side-board, which descended, and rose again covered with viands and wines. And thus the most luxurious Court in Europe, after all its boasted refinements, was glad to return at last, by this singular contrivance, to the quiet and privacy of humble life.

Vie privée de Louis XV. tom. ii. p. 43.

NOTE 16. Verse 182.

Sheds, like an evening-star, its ray serene.

At a Roman supper statues were sometimes employed to hold the lamps.

—Aurea sunt juvenum simulacra per ædeis,
Lampadas igniferas manibus retinentia dextris.

LUCR. ii. 24.

As fashions as old as Homer! Odyss. vii. 100.

On the proper degree and distribution of light we may consult a great master of effect. Il lume grande, ed alto, e non troppo potente, farà quello, che renderà le particole de' corpi molto grate. Tratt. della Pittura di Lionardo da Vinci. c. xli.

Hence every artist requires a broad and high light. Hence also, in a banquet-scene, the most picturesque of all poets has thrown his light from the cieling. *Æneid*. i. 730.

And hence the "starry lamps" of Milton, that
from the arched roof,

Pendent by subtle magic, —————

————— yielded light

As from a sky.

Paradise Lost. i. 726.

NOTE 17. Verse 197.

So thro' the vales of Loire the bee-hives glide.

An allusion to the floating bee-house, or barge laden with bee-hives, which Goldsmith says he saw in some parts of France and Piedmont.

Hist. of the Earth. viii. 87.

NOTE 18. Verse 228.

And, with the swallow, wings the year away!

It was the boast of Lucullus that he changed his climate with the birds of passage.

Plut. in Vit. Lucull.

How often must he have felt the truth here inculcated, that the master of many houses has no home!



TO A
FRIEND
ON HIS
MARRIAGE.

ON thee, blest youth, a father's hand confers
The maid thy earliest, fondest wishes knew.
Each soft enchantment of the soul is hers ;
Thine be the joys to firm attachment due.

As on she moves with hesitating grace,
She wins assurance from his soothing voice ;
And, with a look the pencil could not trace,
Smiles thro' her blushes, and confirms the choice.

Spare the fine tremors of her feeling frame !
To thee she turns—forgive a virgin's fears !
To thee she turns with surest, tenderest claim ;
Weakness that charms, reluctance that endears !

At each response the sacred rite requires,
From her full bosom bursts the unbidden sigh.
A strange mysterious awe the scene inspires ;
And on her lips the trembling accents die.

O'er her fair face what wild emotions play !
What lights and shades in sweet confusion blend !
Soon shall they fly, glad harbingers of day,
And settled sunshine on her soul descend !

Ah soon, thine own confest, ecstatic thought !
That hand shall strew each flinty path with flowers ;
And those blue eyes, with mildest lustre fraught,
Gild the calm current of domestic hours !

FAREWELL.

ONCE more, enchanting girl, adieu !

I must be gone, while yet I may.

Oft shall I weep to think of you ;

But here I will not, cannot stay.

The sweet expression of that face,

For ever changing, yet the same,

Ah no, I dare not turn to trace.

It melts my soul, it fires my frame !

Yet give me, give me, ere I go,
One little lock of those so blest,
That lend your cheek a warmer glow,
And on your white neck love to rest:

—Say, when to kindle soft delight,
That hand has chanc'd with mine to meet,
How could its thrilling touch excite
A sigh so short, and yet so sweet?

O say—but no, it must not be.

Adieu, enchanting girl, adieu!

—Yet still, methinks, you frown on me;

Or never could I fly from you.

TO THE
YOUNGEST DAUGHTER
OF
LADY * * .

AH! why with tell-tale tongue reveal †
What most her blushes would conceal?
Why lift that modest veil to trace
The seraph-sweetness of her face?
Some fairer, better sport prefer;
And feel for us, if not for her.
For this presumption, soon or late,
Know, thine shall be a kindred fate.

† Alluding to some verses which she had written on an
elder sister.

Another shall in vengeance rise—

Sing Harriet's cheeks, and Harriet's eyes ;

And, echoing back her wood-notes wild,

—Trace all the mother in the child !

TO THE
G N A T.

W H E N by the greenwood side, at summer eve,
Poetic visions charm my closing eye ;
And fairy-scenes, that Fancy loves to weave,
Shift to wild notes of sweetest Minstrelsy ;
'Tis thine to range in busy quest of prey,
Thy feathery antlers quivering with delight,
Brush from my lids the hues of heav'n away,
And all is Solitude, and all is Night !
—Ah now thy barbed shaft, relentless fly,
Unsheaths its terrors in the sultry air !

No guardian fylph, in golden panoply,
Lifts the broad shield, and points the sparkling spear.
Now near and nearer rush thy whirring wings,
Thy dragon-scales still wet with human gore.
Hark, thy shrill horn its fearful larum flings!
—I wake in horror, and ‘dare sleep no more!’

VERSES

WRITTEN TO BE SPOKEN BY

MRS. SIDDONS.*

YES, 'tis the pulse of life ! my fears were vain !
I wake, I breathe, and am myself again.
Still in this nether world ; no seraph yet !
Nor walks my spirit, when the sun is set,
With troubled step to haunt the fatal board,
Where I died last—by poison or the sword ;
Blanching each honest cheek with deeds of night,
Done here so oft by dim and doubtful light.

* After a Tragedy, performed for her benefit, at the Theatre Royal in Drury-lane, April 27, 1795.

—To drop all metaphor, that little bell
Call'd back reality, and broke the spell.
No heroine claims your tears with tragic tone ;
A very woman—scarce restrains her own !
Can she, with fiction, charm the cheated mind,
When to be grateful is the part assign'd ?
Ah, No ! she scorns the trappings of her Art ;
No theme but truth, no prompter but the heart !

But, Ladies, say, must I alone unmask ?
Is here no other actress ? let me ask.
Believe me, those, who best the heart dissect,
Know every Woman studies stage-effect.
She moulds her manners to the part she fills,
As Instinct teaches, or as Humour wills ;

And, as the grave or gay her talent calls,
Acts in the drama, till the curtain falls.

First, how her little breast with triumph swells,
When the red coral rings its silver bells !
To play in pantomime is then the *rage*,
Along the carpet's many-colour'd stage ;
Or list her merry thoughts with loud endeavour,
Now here, now there,—in noise and mischief ever !

A school-girl next, she curls her hair in papers,
And mimics father's gout, and mother's vapours ;
Discards her doll, bribes Betty for romances ;
Playful at church, and serious when she dances ;

Tramples alike on customs and on toes,
And whispers all she hears to all she knows;
Terror of caps, and wigs, and sober notions!
A romp ! that *longest* of perpetual motions !
—Till tam'd and tortur'd into foreign graces,
She sports her lovely face at public places ;
And with blue, laughing eyes, behind her fan,
First acts her part with that great actor, MAN.

Too soon a flirt, approach her and she flies !
Frowns when pursued, and, when intreated, sighs !
Plays with unhappy men as cats with mice ;
Till fading beauty hints the late advice.
Her prudence dictates what her pride disdain'd,
And now she sues to slaves herself had chain'd !

Then comes that good old character, a Wife,
With all the dear, distracting cares of life ;
A thousand cards a-day at doors to leave,
And, in return, a thousand cards receive ;
Rouge high, play deep, to lead the ton aspire,
With nightly blaze set PORTLAND-PLACE on fire ;
Snatch half a glimpse at Concert, Opera, Ball,
A Meteor, trac'd by none, tho' seen by all ;
And, when her shatter'd nerves forbid to roam,
In very spleen—rehearse the girls at home.

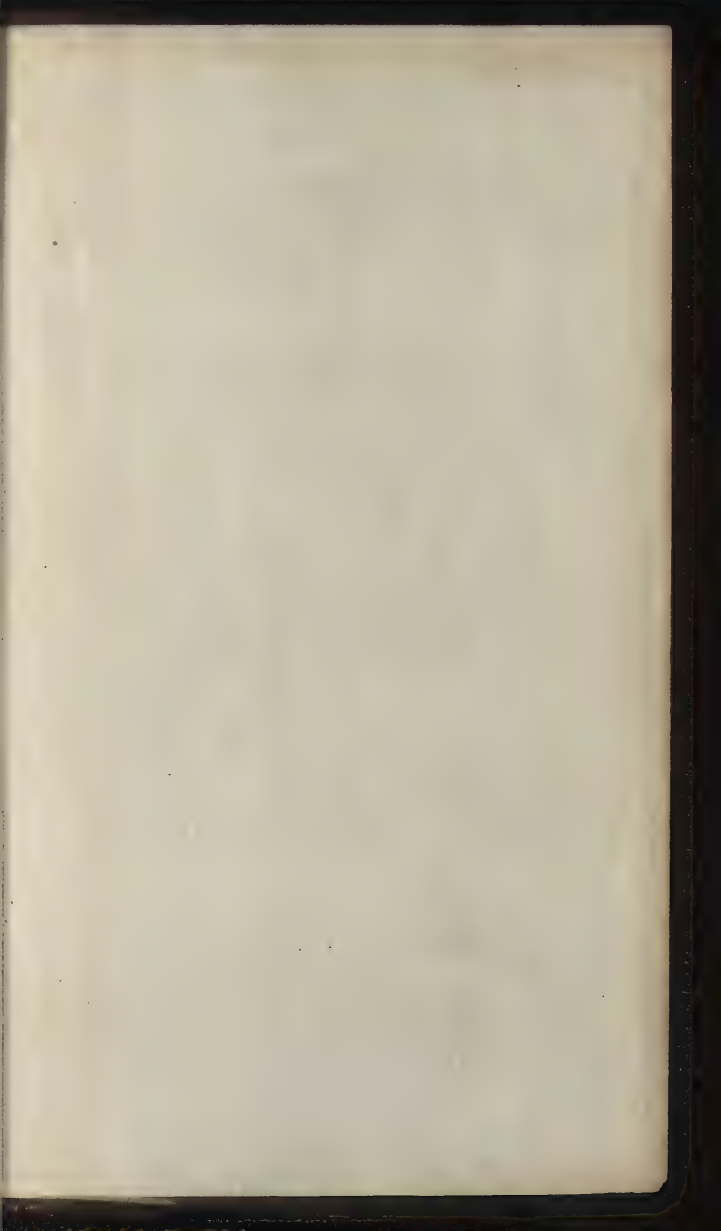
Last the grey Dowager, in ancient flounces,
With snuff and spectacles the age denounces !
Boasts how the Sires of this degenerate Isle
Knelt for a look, and duell'd for a smile ;

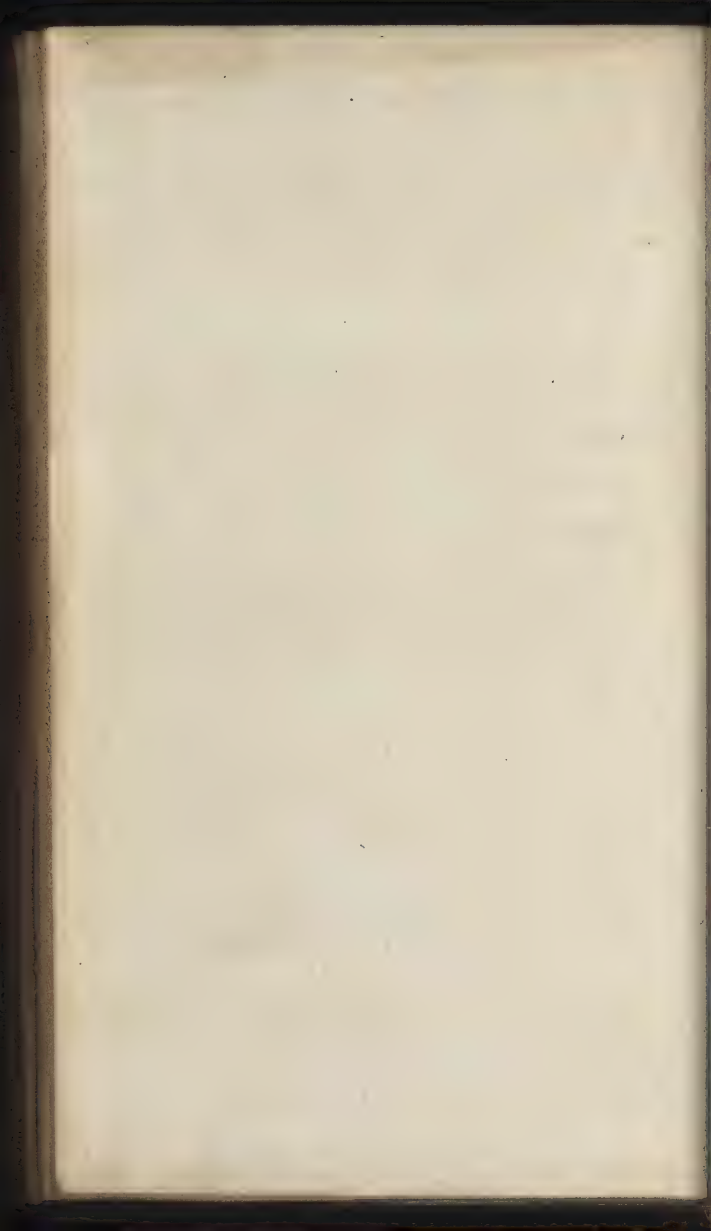
The scourge and ridicule of Goth and Vandal,
Her tea she sweetens, as she sips, with scandal ;
With modern Belles eternal warfare wages,
Like her own birds that clamour from their cages ;
And shuffles round to bear her tale to all,
Like some old Ruin, “ nodding to its fall !”

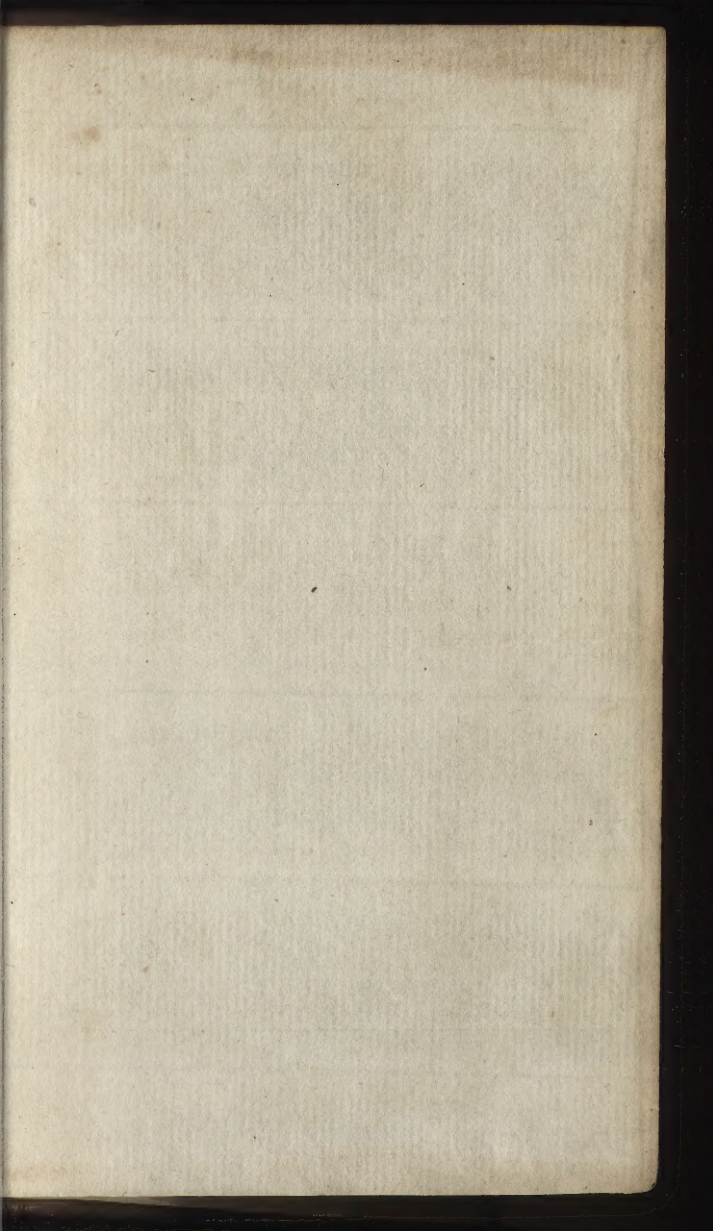
Thus WOMAN makes her entrance and her exit,
Not least an actress when she least suspects it.
Yet Nature oft peeps out and mars the plot,
Each lesson lost, each poor pretence forgot ;
Full oft, with energy that scorns controul,
At once lights up the features of the foul ;
Unlocks each thought chain'd down by coward Art,
And to full day the latent passions start !

—But she, whose first best wish is your applause,
Herself exemplifies the truth she draws.
Born on the stage—thro' every shifting scene,
Obscure or bright, tempestuous or serene,
Still has your smile her trembling spirit fir'd!
And can she act, with thoughts like these inspir'd?
Thus from her mind all artifice she flings,
All skill, all practice, now unmeaning things!
To you, uncheck'd, each genuine feeling flows,
For all that life endears—to you she owes.

THE END.







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